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CASPER, WYO.
COLBY

Former CIA Director William Colby has told a Casper audience the American public has benefited from a transition in the CIA from the cloak and dagger days to modern electronic surveillance.

Colby told a seminar at Casper College Thursday the intelligence agency also has been strengthened by laws passed in the 1970s which give Congress more authority over the agency.

'We have changed the system of intelligence,' he said. 'We now work under the constitution. Thanks to this new concept ... we don't sneak out of Hong Kong and sneak through China to see what is going on on the Manchurian border. We look down to see where the tanks are massed or where there is troop movement.'

Colby said sophisticated intelligence operations mean the country will get no strategic surprises from the Soviet Union.

'We may get surprises from Iran, but not from the Soviet Union,' he said.

There is no chance the Korean commercial airliner shot down over Soviet air space last year was being used as a spy plane, Colby said.

Reflecting on the history of the agency, he said after the disaster at Pearl Harbor the intelligence community began recruiting scholars from universities.

'The key was scholarship and study,' Colby said. 'This was a revolution.'

He said cooperation among scholars, chemists, and scientists made possible the high altitude spy planes that spotted nuclear missiles in Cuba.

Colby said during the agency's early stages Americans were willing to have spys more ruthless than our adversaries', but that has changed.

'When Congress, in a united voice said stop we stopped -- which we did in 1975 in Angola,' he said. 'The Congress controls the power of the purse.'